CHAPTER I ;^,,,

THE HEBEAIO EEBITAGE

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JEWISH History is approximately divided into two nearly equal stretches, the dividing line between them falling (whether one adopts the theological or the political standpoint) at the age of Jesus of Nazareth, or the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans a generation after his death. During the early period, roughly coinciding with the nineteen centuries before the beginning of the Christian era, the Jews (or rather, as they are better termed over most of this period, the Israelites) constituted one of the many lesser nationalities of the Near East, distinguished from their neighbours principally by their religious beliefs and by the superior ethical code which resulted therefrom. During the latter, roughly coincid-ing with the nineteen centuries of the Christian era, they have been a people scattered throughout the world, in all continents and in almost every land, still adhering to their distinctive religious system but exercising their influence as individuals rather than as a collectivity.

It is with the latter period, best distinguished as the "Jewish", that this work will in the main deal. But it would be misleading to omit all reference to the Heritage of Israel, which, taken over by Christianity (in a somewhat modified or expanded form, as Jew and Christian respec-tively hold) has left an ineradicable influence upon the structure of the modern world.